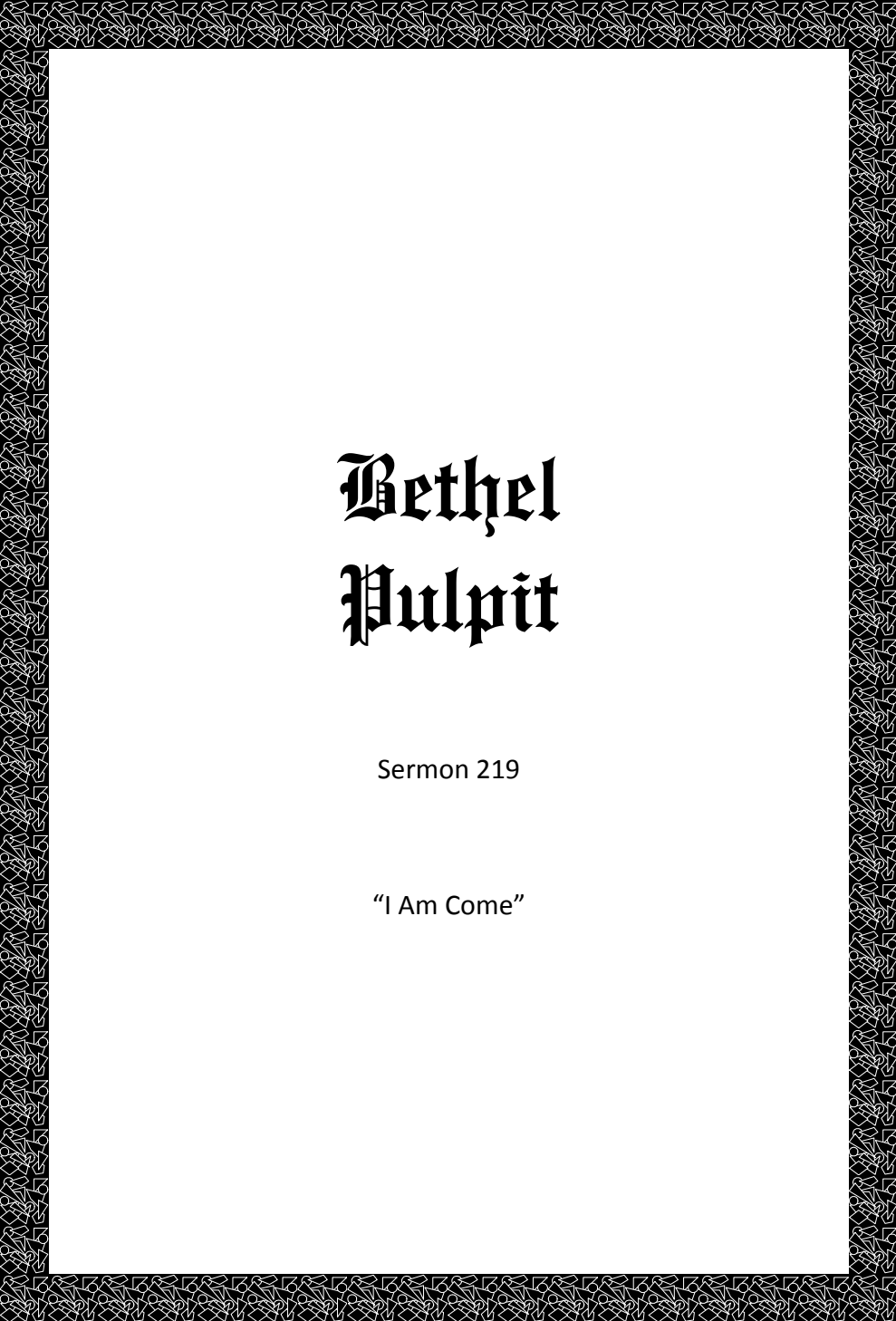




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 219

“I Am Come”

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 1st December, 2002**

Text: *"I am come" (John 10. 10).*

All of us realise that today is the first day in December. O how rapidly this year has sped away! We live our lives as a tale that is told. Soon the year, in the language of Toplady, will sink back like a drop into that eternity whence it came, and the year 2002 will be ended for ever. As we hurry towards the end of the year, it always seems a solemn time. What about those of you who know and fear the Lord? Are you any further on the way to heaven? Have you grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? What about those of you who were unconcerned at the beginning of the year? Are you still unconcerned? It is a year nearer eternity. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Do some of you feel like those who complained in the days of Jeremiah that "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"? But is it the great point, your chief concern, that you might be saved, "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation"? I would that the Holy Spirit might sanctify this time of the year to us each, that we might be made more earnest in the things of God. "It is high time" for us "to awake out of sleep.... The night is far spent, the day is at hand." And the great, the vital point is to be made right, to be made ready, made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "In Christ's obedience clothe, and wash me in His blood."

Also, many of you will realise that today is what is known in the religious world as Advent Sunday. Now of course, we do not keep to the church calendar, yet we do think of times like Easter and times like Whitsun. In its best days, Advent Sunday and the Advent season were appointed by the church that there might be a remembrance of the Saviour's coming (the word *advent*, of course, means *coming*), thinking of how at the end of the month the Saviour's birth is to be remembered. In the best days in the Established Church the Advent season was meant to be a season of preparation for the Saviour's coming. Well, I suppose wherever you look, if you go into the shops, or wherever you go, it is a time of preparation with everybody. You see the shops filled. People are counting it a time of preparation. But the church of old appointed it a time

of preparation. I should think there was quite a bit of legality about it, yet the point was, if we are going to remember the coming of the Saviour, may our hearts be purified; may we be sanctified; may we remember how holy the dear Saviour of sinners is. So the preaching of John the Baptist was: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord,” the need for repentance. I am sure there was a lot of legality in former days, but I think England was a much better place when the hundreds and the thousands used to flock to the local churches and hear these sermons during this Advent season about the need – if we are going to think about the coming of the dear Saviour of sinners, then we ought to think about ourselves and our own lives, and we should consider our own way.

Well, beloved friends, this has rested very powerfully with me this year in this way. Let me try to explain. One day this week we visited what must be the biggest garden centre, perhaps the most magnificent garden centre, in the whole country – and at this time of the year not just limited to garden things. But there was a magnificent display, and there was everything there: the presents, the wrapping paper, the toys – so I might go on and on. And let me be clear, nothing amiss, nothing wrong with them. But in the midst of it all this word dropped very powerfully on my spirit with a great measure of awe and reverence, the voice of the Lord Jesus saying, “I am come.”

Now at the end of this month, supposedly, that is what the country is remembering, what the country is celebrating, that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has come. Yet more and more there is the worldliness, the godlessness, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ being more and yet more excluded, even the cards, more and yet more secular, and in some circles a deliberate, energetic attempt to knock all the religion, all the godliness out of this season. Yet over and above it all there is that voice which says, “I am come.” Now there are many voices in this world, many voices seeking to allure us, many voices calling us to listen, many voices asking us to turn aside. O but to hear this voice of the divine Saviour saying, “I am come”! If you hear that voice, it will have a sobering effect; it will have a solemnising effect; it will have a sanctifying effect.

Well then, during this month there will be preparations in all sorts of ways, and these things are lawful, and in many ways these things are good. J. K. Popham used to rejoice in the Christmas season because of the family gatherings, families gathering together. But as it rests with me

today, during these next days and these next weeks, may we as a congregation live in the light of this word: “I am come” – the one thing that really matters, the wonder of it, the thing that is so often forgotten, the thing the world longs to exclude. God is not in all their thoughts. They do not want God to be in their thoughts. O but may this be written upon our hearts, that this is the important thing, the vital thing, the one thing that matters, the only thing that matters, to hear amidst it all, amidst all the din and all the bustle and all the voices in this world, to hear this voice of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ saying, “I am come.” Because the coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ divides the whole of time into two complete halves: the time *before* the Son of God came and the time *after* the Son of God came. The world has never been the same since. The coming of the Saviour divided time into two complete, separate halves. Now the world does not want it and the world does not like it, but even the world acknowledges it. The whole world is governed by this: what was before the coming of Christ, what was after the coming of Christ. The ungodly, when they write the date, 2002, bear witness even against their wishes that the Son of God is come. They are compelled to bear witness that time has been split into two complete halves by the coming of the Saviour. Even the world has to acknowledge it. Even the ungodly have to acknowledge it, that this is true.

The Lord Jesus says, “I am come.” Then because the Lord Jesus has come, this is something that each one of us is called to ponder and to consider and to think about, that if the Son of God has come, if He has lived upon this earth, then why did He come, and how does it affect me? Now the great question to the end of time must ever be, “What think ye of Christ?” And you cannot escape it. The whole world has to face up to this solemn statement of the incarnate Son of God: “I am come,” the fact of it, the undeniable fact of it; “I am come,” and why He came, and what happened when He came, and what He accomplished when He came, and also that one day He will come again. There will be another day when He says, “I am come.” “And every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.” It is a wonderful mercy if you and I can say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” O but to be brought to the reality of this, and if your religion and mine is real, the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts and He will bring us to this point: “I am come.” It will be a glorious truth. It will be an attractive truth. O but the point will be this: did He come for me, and did I have an interest in His coming? Our hymnwriter says, “With me

upon His heart, He came to bleed and die.” Perhaps some of you here say, “Is it so, Lord Jesus, that Thou didst come from heaven with Thy people’s unworthy names engraven on Thy heart? Then O may my name be there. When Thou didst come, O that my name might be there!” “Set *me* as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm.”

“O let my name engraven stand
Both on Thy heart and on Thy hand;
Seal me upon Thy arm, and wear
That pledge of love for ever there.”

O this voice! Amidst all that is taking place, all the happenings in the world, all the happenings in the country, all the rush and the bustle, all the excitement, all the pleasure, all the sorrow, to hear the voice of One who said, “I am come.”

Now beloved friends, I heard this as *a voice of sorrow*. Never forget that we believe in the true, sacred humanity of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; true Almighty God, yet a real Man, perfectly free from sin, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,” but a real Man, though true Almighty God. When the Lord Jesus came to this earth, when He first spoke these words, “I am come,” then His heart was sorrowful because “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” You think of it, His own people, the Jews, and the wonderful promise of the coming of Messiah, and the amazing fact that now almighty God condescends to leave heaven to dwell upon earth for a season, and the sorrow of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

The ancient Greek philosophers were perhaps the wisest men this world has ever known according to the flesh. I think of people like Socrates and Plato and Aristotle. They longed to find out about God. How that word was proved: “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Of course, they believed in many, many gods, and they came to this conclusion: that there was only one way in which men and women and girls and boys on earth could ever really, truly know God, and that was if one of the gods should leave heaven and come and live upon earth. They said that was the only way. Their natural reason went so far. They said the only way was if one of the gods came to live on earth. But they said, “That is impossible!” None of the gods would ever think of leaving heaven to come and live on earth. That was where Greek philosophy left the human race. But they

realised the wonder of it. Beloved friends, never lose your sense of what an amazing thing it was for the eternal Son of God to be incarnate on this earth, to take our nature without sin into union with His divine Person, to be born of a virgin, to be born at Bethlehem. Now never, never, never lose your sense of the amazing wonder of it.

“He left His radiant throne on high!
Left the bright realms of bliss!
And came to earth to bleed and die!
Was ever love like this?”

Now never lose that sense of wonder and amazement. Now this “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” He who says, “I am come,” is the One who is the Creator of all things, who by the word of His mouth created the worlds. He is true Almighty God. You believe that, don’t you, the wonder of it, that that dear Baby who lay in the manger at Bethlehem is true Almighty God? It is the greatest act of faith, but we believe it. “The eternal Word, who built the earth and skies, takes on Him flesh, and in a manger lies.” Now this is the One who speaks.

He says, “I am come.” O but it is a voice of sorrow. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” As it was then, so it is now. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” As it was then, so it is now. At His birth and throughout His earthly life, He was “despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” As it was then, so it is now. The world does not want the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and more than ever this year the world is trying to exclude any thought of the coming of the Saviour. There are going to be the celebrations; there are going to be the presents; there are going to be all these things; but more than ever Satan is seeking to exclude the Lord Jesus. But that voice still sounds, “I am come.” Now may it be written on our hearts. But it is a voice of sorrow. Never forget it is a voice of sorrow. The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, though true Almighty God, yet in His sacred humanity He was so sad, He was so sorrowful, the way in which sinners rejected Him. We think of the Lord Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and this is beyond our comprehension, but the Lord Jesus did look over Jerusalem and He did weep. “I am come.” It was a voice of sorrow, and Jerusalem received Him not. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children

together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Now this is the voice of sorrow.

And Jesus says, "I am come." And when He first came, when He was born at Bethlehem, the world just went on as if nothing had happened, apart from a few shepherds. The angels came down from heaven to sing His praise over Bethlehem. O the awfulness, the solemnity of it! Now Jesus says, "I am come," but there is no room for Him in the inn, and there is still no room for Him in the inn, and there is still no room for Him in the world, and by nature there is no room for the Saviour in your heart or in mine. Now that is your condemnation and that is mine. The crowded inn "for other guests, of various sorts, had room; but none for Him." By nature that is you, that is me. It is not just Bethlehem on the night of the incarnation; there is no room in our hearts. The great work of the Spirit of God is to create a place in your heart and mine which none but the Saviour can fill, an aching void which none but the Saviour can fill. And blessed, thrice blessed are you if you have that place in your heart which the Holy Ghost Himself has created which none but the Saviour can fill.

"Is there a space within thy breast
Which none but Christ can fill?
He's God, and therefore can give rest,
He's love, and therefore will."

The Holy Ghost never created a space in a sinner's heart that only Christ can fill and then left that sinner to be dashed with disappointment, distress and despair. O to have that space in our hearts! But Jesus says, "I am come." It is a wonderful thing if He says, "I am come" to dwell in your hearts. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "I am come" to dwell in your hearts for ever. "I am come" to dwell in your hearts to all eternity.

"I am come." O but this voice of sorrow! "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." As it was then, so it is now: no room in the inn. And what about when those wise men by divine revelation left all to follow the star, to find the newborn King, and they came to Jerusalem, and they made inquiries? "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" And they received tidings that it must be in Bethlehem, for so the prophet had written. They went to Bethlehem. Now He is come, He is come. But we do not read that one single person from Jerusalem went with them to Bethlehem to find the newborn King! There was only one who really wanted to know all about it and that was Herod, and that was that he might

slay Him. I hear this as a voice of sorrow. The Lord Jesus says, "I am come," the great Creator of all things, the eternal God, the wonder of it, the amazement of it, the love of it! Yet the world goes on and the world does not want to know. You see, the world loves Christmas; the world hates Christ. I remember visiting the Bethesda Home a few years ago. There was an old man there, well over a hundred years old, and he was very weak and feeble. He just about realised it was Christmas time, and very feebly he said this to me: "I don't want Christmas; I want Christ!"

Well, beloved friends, may this be written in our hearts, that Jesus says, "I am come." O but with awe and reverence also I hear this. This is *a voice of anger*, not just a voice of sorrow, a voice of grief. This is the Almighty God in the Person of His beloved Son. We read so much in the Scripture about His righteous anger. This is a point that is often forgotten. It is a point the world wants to forget. Now do not forget the righteous anger of the Lord Jesus; His righteous anger at the scribes and the Pharisees; His righteous anger at some of the things they said, some of the things they did; His righteous anger at the beginning of His ministry when He went and purified the temple; His righteous anger, the last thing He did before riding into Jerusalem to die, again cleansing the temple. The world has a Jesus of its own imagination. What would the world think about this: the Lord Jesus going into the temple and turning over the tables of the moneychangers, upsetting them, throwing their ill-gotten gains on the floor, taking a whip of small cords, driving them with His whip out of the temple? Is this the Jesus of popular imagination? "His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." It was zeal for the honour and glory of His Father in heaven, and He was filled with righteous anger. And I believe today the Lord Jesus, risen, exalted in heaven, is filled with righteous anger at the way men deny His fairest claims, the way in which men still despise and reject Him. But you think of the wonder of it, the mercy, the love, the matchless condescension, that Jesus says, "I am come."

O but the anger of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! My mind went to the parable of the wicked husbandmen. The nobleman sent his servants one by one to the vineyard and they treated them disgracefully. At last he said, "I will send my beloved son. They will hear him." But they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him." What will the Lord then do to those wicked husbandmen? He will miserably destroy them. That is the voice of righteous anger. Jesus says, "I am come." And what will He

do to these wicked husbandmen, these who despised and rejected Him? He will miserably destroy them.

Now again I hear this voice as *a voice of divine authority*, the Lord Jesus saying, “I am come.” Who is He? The eternal God. Who is He? The great I AM, He that revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, who said, “I AM THAT I AM,” the unchangeable, the sovereign, the eternal, the everlasting, the Almighty God. Now He speaks with divine authority, with almighty authority. He says, “I am come.” It is the same voice that spoke in creation when “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”; when He said, “Let there be ...” and there was. It is the same voice. He says, “I am come,” and yet sinners do not hear it, will not hear it, refuse to hear it. But this voice of divine authority still stands. Almighty God says, “I am come.”

Well, one day *He will come again*. When those godly reformers established what they called the Advent season, there was always the reminder of the two comings of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: His first coming as a Saviour to Bethlehem, His second coming in divine power and glory as a Judge to judge the world in righteousness. Now the Lord Jesus here in meekness and lowliness and love in John chapter 10 says, “I am come.” But one day, and the day hastens on, again the Lord Jesus will say, “I am come.” It will be the same voice, and yet in a sense it will be a different voice. It will be a voice which will fill heaven and earth like a voice of thunder, like the sound of many waters, when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with a shout with all His glorious angels with Him to judge the world in righteousness. Well, it will be a different thing for sinners then. I wonder how many people in this chapel this morning can say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”; that if the Lord Jesus were to come tonight, you would look up to heaven and say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Perhaps with many of you it is this:

“When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come
To take Thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?”

O may it be our great desire, to be ready, to be made right, to flee for refuge to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “This is the welcome gospel-day wherein free grace abounds.”

There is another “I am come.” That is *the day of death* when the Lord Jesus as Almighty God appears there. It may be to a dying bed; it may be in an accident in the street. “I am come,” and O what a mercy if it is “I am come” in the sense of that beautiful word in John 11: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” O but how solemn it is personally with each one of us, with you, with me, when the Lord will draw near, when our time on earth is at an end, and we must now go into the great unknown, a never-ending eternity, to meet our Maker, to given an account. O how shall I stand in that great day? And some of us have had this brought home with divine, almighty power in our conscience. We have had to flee to Jesus our only hope, our only plea, His precious blood, His mercy. “Jesus, save me, or I die.”

Well, it is not how much. There are only three words here, but who is it who speaks them? O this divine, almighty voice. Now may you and I hear it. The Lord Jesus still says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.” What does that mean: “stand at the door”? Well, it means the world and the professing church have tried to put Him outside. They do not want Him inside. He is outside the door with the greater part of the people. But still outside the door this voice reverberates through the earth: “I am come.” Beloved friends, it is your mercy and mine if we can face up to this solemn yet glorious truth, if in a way of mercy and salvation we can rejoice in it.

(If the Lord will, the evening sermon on the same text will be published next month.)